

{Nymphus Coridon Hanks

N.C. Hanks later portrayed their poverty as well as anyone. "No words can describe Sally Murdock's struggle to maintain a home and keep body and soul together. Their food supply was used or shared until it was gone. Clothing and other necessities wore out. They were more than a thousand miles from a store, but if a store had been next door, they had no money to buy."³

Somehow they survived that first winter and early in the spring of 1848 Joseph plowed and planted the first ground broken by a plow at Mill Creek, sowing five acres of corn. Land had been allotted to each pioneer, and Joseph and his family received their "Inheritance in Zion" as had been promised by Joseph Smith. Theirs were choice lots, Sally's land being the present southeast corner of Main Street at Third South, now the site of the Judge Building. Joseph and Eunice's lot was located at the present southwest corner of Main Street at Fourth South, for many years the site of the Newhouse Hotel. They were also given a farmsite at the southeast corner of the present Liberty Park on Seventh East. Since there was no irrigation water at the Liberty Park site at that time, Joseph broke ground at Mill Creek where water was more easily obtained.

Prices were high and clothing soon wore out and was impossible to replace, since the nearest stores were across the mountains and prairies in Illinois, the land they had been driven from. In his journal Joseph recalled purchasing "six little potatoes for 75¢."⁴ Sally spun a small piece of cloth from wool cut from her sheep, but it took time for her little band to increase, so cloth was very hard to come by. Shirts and trousers were made from old bed ticks while shoes were made from the hind leg skins of oxen turned inside out. To make shoes Joseph would cut the hide above and below the gambrel joint, pull the skin off and sew the lower end closed with sinews. The natural crook of the hide at the joint would then quickly adapt to the shape of the foot.

Joseph built a log cabin on his "inheritance lot" and helped Nymphus put up an adobe brick house on his mother's lot. While cutting logs in Bingham Canyon to build a home for Eunice, Joseph suffered a painful accident. "I was hauling timber from Bingham Canyon and went to tie a chain in front of an ox when he caught me with his horns and threw me 5 or 6 feet, tearing a hole through my face into my mouth. I got the load chained up and took the timber to Salt Lake

3. Men of the Rockies, Pg. 46, Hanks, 1944.

4. Journal JSM.

Joseph Stacy Murdock
Elizabeth Hunter & Jane Sharp

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*City where John Kay sewed up my face. It soon healed."*⁵ The house he helped build for his mother was a crude affair at first but in time she made it quite comfortable, as described by N.C. Hanks. "Sally Murdock's home started as a conglomeration of a covered wagon and a wickiup, finally developing into a large eight room adobe house."⁶

Sally was able to trade some old cloth for three heifer cows, but they were at the Goodyear Ranch, or Brownsville, a tiny settlement which later became Ogden, 30 miles to the north. Nymphus took eight small biscuits which he stuffed in his pockets and walked barefoot all the way there and back, a distance of 60 miles, but he brought the heifers home safely. Joseph's corn at Mill Creek was just starting to ripen when a hoard of crickets invaded that part of the valley. His journal tells the story as well as words can.

*"When the corn commenced to ear, the crickets came. Brother Buys had 10 acres next to mine and I saw the crickets cut down the last hill of his corn. Mine was next. I thought I heard thunder but there wasn't a cloud. I looked overhead and I saw the heavens full of seagulls. Thy landed along the ditch separating our corn and began eating the crickets. They would eat, drink a little water, then spew them up and begin eating again until they ate them all and we were spared. I stood like a post and saw them kill the crickets and never cut ten hills of my corn down, so you can see the hand of the Lord in preserving us."*⁷

Joseph was still in charge of the church livestock, but herding it presented little problem for he had the cattle driven across a bay of shallow water to Church Island, now Antelope Island in the Great Salt Lake, where it required only a few herders to watch over them. Antelope were numerous on the island but the buffalo had all been killed by Indians before the Mormons arrived, so only a few buffalo skulls were found there or at Church Pastures, now Davis County.

Times were hard and there was no money in circulation, but trade was brisk between the settlers and gold seekers enroute to California. One of the most skilful traders was Nymphus Murdock, who began his career as a merchant by

5. Ibid.

6. Men Of The Rockies, Pg. 46, Hanks, 1944.

7. Journal JSM.

✓ her home for the rest of her life. In time Joseph's new wife would give birth to seven children. There was lots of love between Eunice and Eliza, and several of Eliza's children received their education at Eunice's home, where by then the two Indian children Pick and Pernetta were being schooled in "readin', writin' and 'rithmatick" as well as learning a new way of living. Eunice's new home at ✓ American Fork was only a crude cabin at first, at a time when oil-paper windows were common and a hand-me-down bedspread was a mark of luxury. In time she made it into a comfortable home, with all the homespun nick-knacks and hand sewn pretty things she was noted for making.

Meanwhile Nymphus was gaining a reputation as a shrewd trader and merchant. He usually came out best in any kind of a horse trade and was able to earn enough to allow he and his mother to live comfortably. Nymphus was 22 years old and was engaged to be married to a girl who had been hired to work at his home, to help Sally who was then becoming quite feeble. But the engagement was a stormy one, ending in a most unexpected way. N.C. Hanks described what happened. *"One day Nymphus went to work at his farm and forgot to leave any wood chopped for a fire to cook dinner. His intended took an axe and chopped his best ox yoke into stove wood. When Nymphus returned he was furious, and slapped her face. This ended their engagement but they continued to be friends for the rest of their lives."*²¹

✓ Nymphus was also having his share of trouble with Benny Norris, who he said was becoming a little bit "touched" or eccentric as he grew up. Sally owned a large tomcat which she was quite proud of and one day the cat was sitting atop a pile of manure when Benny saw it and shot it. Sally was terribly upset and demanded to know why Benny had killed her pet. Benny said, *"The cat was saying his prayers and I'm sure he was asking God to let him come to heaven!"* One day a neighbor's cow broke down Sally's fence and was eating her corn. Nymphus was angry and said, *"I wish someone would kill that darned old cow!"* Benny took him at his word and shot the cow, and Nymphus had to pay the damages, \$40!²²

Brigham Young wanted Joseph to spend more time watching over the church's livestock at Church Pastures so as early as 1850 Joseph had built a cabin

21. Men of The Rockies, Pg. 52, Hanks, 1944.

22. Ibid, Pg. 47.

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not far from where the present stockyards at North Salt Lake City are located. That cabin soon had to be built larger for his family grew quickly. In time four children were born at Church Pastures. Eliza gave birth to Sarah Ann on March 2nd, 1853 and to John Heber, always called John "H" on April 28th, 1854. In later years Sarah Ann, his first born, described their home at Church Pastures as being a two room cabin with a dirt roof and floor. She recalled collecting down from cat-tails to make pillows and making soap from wood ashes and tallow.²³

It kept Joseph busy keeping a home at Salt Lake City for Eliza and another at American Fork for Eunice while taking care of his cattle at White's Fort and watching over the church livestock at Church Pastures. Eunice would travel to their cabin at Church Pastures to help Eliza churn butter and make cheese, which they would trade for corn and grain. Extra butter and cheese was hauled to the tithing office at Salt Lake City where those in need could get it or it was sent back along the Mormon Trail to help those who hadn't seen fresh milk or butter in many months.

One day Brigham Young visited Church Pastures to see how Joseph was taking care of the livestock, and drove his buggy as far north as what was then called Sand Ridge. He stopped where a small stand of bushes were growing and looked over the desolate landscape. Then to the surprise of Joseph and others riding with him, he said, "*Someday there will be many houses here, and a line of settlements from Salt Lake City to Ogden so close together that a person won't be able to tell where one starts and the other ends.*"²⁴ To those listening it seemed to be an impossible dream, but the spot where he made that prophetic statement is now located near the center of Clearfield City, one of a line of unbroken towns stretching from Salt Lake City to Ogden.

Joseph was always a good hand with livestock, and often took risks while herding the nearly wild animals. Stock ran on the open range then, so being a fast rider and swinging a true lariat were marks of the good herder. Another mark all herders gained in time were broken bones and assorted scars. Joseph had his share of both and often wrote of encounters between him and his livestock.

23. How Beautiful Upon the Mountains, Pg. 1074, DUP, 1963.

24. Interview with Jesse D. Barlow, Clearfield, Utah, August 29th, 1981.

*"In 1856 while working at Church Pastures I was knocked down by an oxen. He throwed me so heavy on my back that my feet came over and doubled me up, so that he jumped on me and drove his horns into my legs. He doubled me up so short that it sprung my neck in the big joint. I was so broken up that I couldn't stand. Another time I was caught by a lasso rope and dragged by a wild horse, and once my foot caught in a stirrup and I was dragged quite a bit, but it didn't hurt me."*²⁵

On April 13th, 1836 Jane Sharp was born at Clark-Manin, Scotland and three years later, on April 17th, 1839 Elizibeth Hunter was born on the same street in that same Scottish village. The two girls were raised next door to each other and grew up as close friends, attending the same school and church. As young women both were baptized by Mormon missionaries. Jane's father, Nathaniel Sharp died of miner's consumption in Scotland, leaving a destitute wife with several small children, Jane being one of them. Jane's mother also joined the Morimon Church and with her small children made her way to America on a crowded sailing ship, the long voyage taking nine months. They made their way to Salt Lake City, arriving in 1850. Jane, then age 14 walked barefoot all the way across the plains.

Elizibeth Hunter followed her friend Jane Sharp to America on the sailing ship North Atlantic in 1850 with her mother, two sisters, and a brother. Her father had been expected to follow them, but like Jane Sharp's father, he too died in Scotland. Elizibeth's mother died of cholera and was buried by the side of the Mississippi, although Elizibeth never knew where. At the age of 13 Elizibeth was left alone in a strange land with two younger sisters and a baby brother to care for. An uncle took in one of the sisters and found a place for the other in a wagon train heading west, leaving Elizibeth alone with her brother Jimmie, only 6 years old. Driving a milch cow ahead of her and with her brother by the hand she walked barefoot across the prairies and mountains to Zion, arriving at Salt Lake City on August 13th, 1852.

At Salt Lake City the two girls enjoyed a happy reunion and renewed their friendship. Both soon found employment at Church Pastures working for Joseph Murdock, milking cows and helping Eliza make butter and cheese. Joseph's journal is silent about any courtship he may have had with either Jane Sharp or

25. Journal JSM.

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Elizibeth Hunter, but on June 11th, 1854 he was married to both in a ceremony performed by Brigham Young at the Endowment House. Jane was 18 years old while Elizibeth was 15. Joseph was then 32 years old. His third and fourth marriages proved to be very happy, and in time greatly increased his family. Jane Sharp gave him nine children while Elizibeth Hunter gave birth to eleven. Joseph could no longer doubt Hyrum Smith's Patriarchal Blessing that he would have a large family!

The following year, on October 13th, 1855 his brother Nymphus married Sarah Melissa Barney, a pretty girl only one year younger than he. His close friend N.C. Hanks described the marriage, but perhaps with tongue in cheek. "One day Nymphus complained about his mother's cooking, so she replied, 'If you don't like my cooking go and get yourself a wife, you are old enough and big enough to marry!' He immediately put on his best bedtick shirt and called on Sarah Barney. They were playing a chess game when he proposed, and when she accepted on such short acquaintance he did not have a ring to seal the bargain, but instead gave her a Mexican dollar as a pledge, which bound their marriage for life in the absence of a ring. When their marriage began, their total dowry consisted of a butcher knife, a frying pan and an axe. Their courtship was short, but their union was life long."²⁶

With the outbreak of the Walker War in 1852, both Joseph and Nymphus stood guard or scouted for the Minutemen, but most of Chief Wakara's depredations were committed in the San Pete section of central Utah, far removed from their homes near the Salt Lake Valley. Joseph always advocated treating the Indians as brothers, saying it was better to fight them with biscuits, not bullets, a policy which Brigham Young also followed. In July, 1853 Brigham Young said, "How many times have I been asked what I intend to do with Wakara. I say let him alone. I have not declared war on the Indians, nor am I calculating to do it. My policy is to give them presents and be kind to them. Instead of being Wakara's enemy, I have sent him a great pile of tobacco to smoke when he is lonely in the mountains. He is at war with the only friends he has upon the earth, and I want him to have some tobacco to smoke."²⁷

26. Men Of The Rockies, Pg. 51, Hanks, 1944.

27. Heart Throbs of The West, Vol. 1, Pg. 92, DUP, SLC.